

NOMENCLATURE OF THE AMUR LILAC,
SYRINGA RETICULATA VAR. *AMURENSIS* (OLEACEAE)

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The natural range of *Syringa reticulata* (Blume) Hara includes portions of the islands of Japan and the mainland of Asia in Korea, China, and the Soviet Union. In both floristic and horticultural works, the Japanese and mainland populations are usually considered to be varietally distinct. The differences are so subtle that in only a few publications, most of them not recent, are these taxa treated as distinct species. However, the differences are not without horticultural significance, and the two taxa are consistently recognized in horticultural literature. In a few floristic works, additional varieties of dubious taxonomic acceptability are listed, but these variants are not represented in horticulture, nor do their names have any bearing on the nomenclature of the more widely accepted taxa.

Most of the representatives of *S. reticulata* in cultivation in North America and Europe are derived from the Japanese populations, and are called Japanese Tree Lilacs. Plants derived from the continental Asiatic populations are also cultivated, although less frequently, and are known as Amur Lilacs.

When the genus *Syringa* was monographed by McKelvey in 1928, this species, as here circumscribed, was called *S. amurensis* Ruprecht. The Amur Lilac was the nominate variety, and the Japanese Tree Lilac was designated *S. amurensis* var. *japonica* (Maximowicz) Franchet & Savatier. In recent years, however, this species has been called *S. reticulata* (Blume) Hara, the epithet *reticulata* having seven years' priority over *amurensis*. The basionym, *Ligustrum reticulatum* Blume, was based on specimens from Japan; therefore, the Japanese Tree Lilac constitutes the nominate variety, and bears the autonym *S. reticulata* var. *reticulata*.

When Hara (1941) published the name *S. reticulata* for the species, he also published the combination *S. reticulata* var. *mandshurica* (Maximowicz) Hara for the Amur Lilac, this name having been based on *Ligustrina amurensis* α *mandshurica* Maximowicz. This basionym, however, is patently illegitimate, and therefore without standing in considerations of priority, under Article 63 and other provisions of the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (ICBN).

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In Maximowicz's (1859) first work dealing with the tree lilacs, he treated all of the continental Asian members of this group as *Syringa amurensis* Ruprecht, comprising two varieties (Article 35.3, ICBN): α *genuina*, reported from several localities in the Amur watershed, and β *pekinensis*, based on *S. pekinensis* Ruprecht, from the vicinity of Beijing (then transliterated Peking). Maximowicz first used the epithet *mandshurica* in this context in 1875, in a work dealing with the flora of Japan as well as of northeast China. The group as a whole was then called *Ligustrina amurensis* (Ruprecht) Ruprecht, with three subordinate taxa: α *mandshurica*, with its range given as Manchuria, extending to the Korean border; β *pekinensis*, from the vicinity of Beijing, and γ *japonica*, from Japan. From the use of " α ," the absence of any mention of [var.] *genuina*, and the range given for α *mandshurica*, it is evident that Maximowicz applied the epithet *mandshurica* to the typical subdivision of *L. amurensis*. This conclusion was reached by Korshinsky (1892), who treated the nominate variety of *Syringa amurensis* as "var. *mandshurica* (*genuina*) Maxim." (italicization Korshinsky's), and also by McKelvey (1928). Under the present rules of nomenclature, the names *Ligustrina amurensis* α *mandshurica* Maxim. and *Syringa amurensis* var. *mandshurica* (Maxim.) Korshinsky were nomenclaturally superfluous when published, and the priority of the epithet *mandshurica* at varietal rank therefore dates only from its use by Hara in 1941.

Furthermore, there was no description nor any reference to a description directly and exclusively associated with the taxon *mandshurica* by Maximowicz (1875). His statement that within *L. amurensis* "formae tres distingui possint" (emphasis mine) makes it questionable whether varietal rank can be assigned to *mandshurica* as of 1875.

Under the provisions of amendments to the ICBN dealing with autonyms, adopted at Sydney in 1981, Maximowicz's naming of *Syringa amurensis* [var.] *pekinensis* in 1859 automatically established a var. *amurensis*, even though Maximowicz at that time called the taxon [var.] *genuina*. These recent amendments provide that the epithet of the autonym *S. amurensis* var. *amurensis* has priority when the Amur Lilac is treated as a variety of *S. reticulata*. The following new combination is therefore required:

Syringa reticulata (Blume) Hara var. *amurensis* (Ruprecht) Pringle, comb. nov. Basionym: *Syringa amurensis* Ruprecht, Bull. Cl. Phys.-Math. Acad. Imp. Sci. Saint-Petersbourg, ser. 2, 15:371. 1857.

Since the name *S. reticulata* var. *mandshurica* has been used with increasing frequency in recent years, this new combination does result in an unfortunate element of nomenclatural instability. Conversely, however, it restores a familiar epithet that was associated with the Amur Lilac for many years and is still frequently encountered. Also, it is conducive to nomenclatural clarity that whether the Amur Lilac is treated as a variety of *S. reticulata* or as a distinct species, it will bear the same epithet. A notable benefit of the recent amendments to the ICBN is that it is no longer necessary, in this context, to be concerned with the identity of the type of the name *S. amurensis* var. *rotundifolia* (Decaisne) Lingelsheim (see McKelvey, 1928), since its problematical and unfamiliar epithet has priority at varietal rank only from 1920.

Literature Cited

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- Maximowicz, C.J. 1859. Primitiae florum amurensis. Versuch einer Flora des Amurlandes. Mem. Acad. Imp. Sci. St. Pétersbourg Divers Savants 9:1-504, pl. 1-10 + 1 map.
- McKelvey, S.D. 1928. The Lilac: a Monograph. New York: The Macmillan Company. xvi + 581 pp. + 171 pl. + 4 charts.